

Cambridge Plain Texts

BYRON
THE VISION OF
JUDGMENT

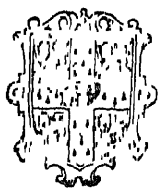
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BYRON
THE VISION OF
JUDGMENT



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THE VISION OF JUDGMENT

BY

QUEVEDO REDIVIVUS

Suggested by the composition so entitled
by the author of "Wat Tyler"

"A Daniel come to judgment! yea, a Daniel!
I thank thee, Jew, for teaching me that word "

PREFACE

It hath been wisely said, that "One fool makes many", and it hath been poetically observed—

"That fools rush in where angels fear to tread "

POPE.

If Mr Southey had not rushed in where he had no business, and where he never was before, and never will be again, the following poem would not have been written. It is not impossible that it may be as good as his own, seeing that it cannot, by any species of stupidity, natural or acquired, be *worse*. The gross flattery, the dull impudence, the renegade intolerance, and impious cant, of the poem by the author of "Wat Tyler," are something so stupendous as to form the sublime of himself—containing the quintessence of his own attributes.

So much for his poem—a word on his preface. In this preface it has pleased the magnanimous Laureate to draw the picture of a supposed "Satanic School," the which he doth recommend to the notice of the legislature; thereby adding to his other laurels the ambition of those of an informer. If there exists anywhere, except in his imagination, such a School, is he

not sufficiently armed against it by his own intense vanity? The truth is, that there are certain writers whom Mr S imagines, like Scrub, to have "talked of *him*; for they laughed consumedly "

I think I know enough of most of the writers to whom he is supposed to allude, to assert, that they, in their individual capacities, have done more good, in the charities of life, to their fellow-creatures, in any one year, than Mr Southey has done harm to himself by his absurdities in his whole life; and this is saying a great deal. But I have a few questions to ask.

1stly, Is Mr Southey the author of "Wat Tyler"?

2ndly, Was he not refused a remedy at law by the highest judge of his beloved England, because it was a blasphemous and seditious publication?

3rdly, Was he not entitled by William Smith, in full parliament, "a rancorous renegade"?

4thly, Is he not poet laureate, with his own lines on Martin the regicide staring him in the face?

And, 5thly, Putting the four preceding items together, with what conscience dare *he* call the attention of the laws to the publications of others, be they what they may?

I say nothing of the cowardice of such a proceeding, its meanness speaks for itself; but I wish to touch upon the *motive*, which is neither more nor less than that Mr S has been laughed at a little in some recent publications, as he was of yore in the "Anti-Jacobin," by his present patrons. Hence all this "skimble-scamble stuff" about "Satanic," and so forth. However, it is worthy of him—"quails ab inepto."

If there is anything obnoxious to the political opinions of a portion of the public in the following poem, they may thank Mr Southey. He might have written hexameters, as he has written everything else, for aught that the writer cared—had they been upon another subject. But to attempt to canonise a monarch, who, whatever were his household virtues, was neither a successful nor a patriot king,—inasmuch as several years of his reign passed in war with America and Ireland, to say nothing of the aggression upon France,—like all other exaggeration, necessarily begets opposition. In whatever manner he may be spoken of in this new "Vision," his *public* career will not be more favourably transmitted by history. Of his private virtues (although a little expensive to the nation) there can be no doubt.

With regard to the supernatural personages treated of, I can only say that I know as much about them, and (as an honest man) have a better right to talk of them than Robert Southey. I have also treated them more tolerantly. The way in which that poor insane creature, the Laureate, deals about his judgments in the next world, is like his own judgment in this. If it was not completely ludicrous, it would be something worse. I don't think that there is much more to say at present.

QUEVEDO REDIVIVUS.

P.S.—It is possible that some readers may object, in these objectionable times, to the freedom with which saints, angels, and spiritual persons discourse

in this "Vision." But, for precedents upon such points, I must refer him to Fielding's "Journey from this World to the next," and to the Visions of myself, the said Quevedo, in Spanish or translated. The reader is also requested to observe, that no doctrinal tenets are insisted upon or discussed, that the person of the Deity is carefully withheld from sight, which is more than can be said for the Laureate, who hath thought proper to make him talk, not "like a school-divine," but like the unscholarlike Mr Southey. The whole action passes on the outside of heaven, and Chaucer's "Wife of Bath," Pulci's "Morgante Maggiore," Swift's "Tale of a Tub," and the other works above referred to, are cases in point of the freedom with which saints, &c may be permitted to converse in works not intended to be serious.

Q R.

* * Mr Southey being, as he says, a good Christian and vindictive, threatens, I understand, a reply to this our answer. It is to be hoped that his visionary faculties will in the mean time have acquired a little more judgment, properly so called. otherwise he will get himself into new dilemmas. These apostate Jacobins furnish rich rejoinders. Let him take a specimen. Mr Southey laudeth grievously "one Mr Landor," who cultivates much private renown in the shape of Latin verses; and not long ago, the poet laureate dedicated to him, it appeareth, one of his fugitive lyrics, upon the strength of a poem called "Gebir." Who could suppose, that in this same Gebir the aforesaid Savage Landor (for such is his grim cognomen)

putteth into the infernal regions no less a person than the hero of his friend Mr Southey's heaven,—yea, even George the Third! See also how personal Savage becometh, when he hath a mind The following is his portrait of our late gracious sovereign:

(Prince Gebir having descended into the infernal regions, the shades of his royal ancestors are, at his request, called up to his view, and he exclaims to his ghostly guide)—

“Aroar, what wretch that nearest us? what wretch
Is that with eyebrows white and slanting brow?
Listen! him yonder who, bound down supine,
Shrinks yelling from that sword there, engine-hung
He too amongst my ancestors! I hate
The despot, but the dastard I despise.
Was he our countryman?”

“Alas, O king!

Iberia bore him, but the breed accurst
Inclement winds blew blighting from north-east”
“He was a warrior then, nor fear'd the gods?”
“Gebir, he fear'd the demons, not the gods,
Though them indeed his daily face adored;
And was no warrior, yet the thousand lives
Squander'd, as stones to exercise a sling,
And the tame cruelty and cold caprice—
Oh madness of mankind! address'd, adored!”

Gebir, p. 28

I omit noticing some edifying Ithyphallics of Savagius, wishing to keep the proper veil over them, if his grave but somewhat indiscreet worshipper will suffer it; but certainly these teachers of “great moral lessons” are apt to be found in strange company.

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I

SAINT PETER sat by the celestial gate:

His keys were rusty, and the lock was dull,
So little trouble had been given of late;

Not that the place by any means was full,
But since the Gallic era "eighty-eight"

The devils had ta'en a longer, stronger pull,
And "a pull altogether," as they say
At sea—which drew most souls another way.

II

The angels all were singing out of tune,

And hoarse with having little else to do,
Excepting to wind up the sun and moon,

Or curb a runaway young star or two,
Or wild colt of a comet, which too soon

Broke out of bounds o'er th'ethereal blue,
Splitting some planet with its playful tail,
As boats are sometimes by a wanton whale.

III

The guardian seraphs had retired on high,

Finding their charges past all care below,
Terrestrial business fill'd nought in the sky
Save the recording angel's black bureau;

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Who found, indeed, the facts to multiply
With such rapidity of vice and woe,
That he had stripp'd off both his wings in quills,
And yet was in arrear of human ills.

IV

His business so augmented of late years,
That he was forced, against his will no doubt,
(Just like those cherubs, earthly ministers,)
For some resource to turn himself about,
And claim the help of his celestial peers,
To aid him ere he should be quite worn out
By the increased demand for his remarks.
Six angels and twelve saints were named his clerks

V

This was a handsome board—at least for heaven;
And yet they had even then enough to do,
So many conquerors' cars were daily driven,
So many kingdoms fitted up anew;
Each day too slew its thousands six or seven,
Till at the crowning carnage, Waterloo,
They threw their pens down in divine disgust—
The page was so besmear'd with blood and dust

VI

This by the way, 'tis not mine to record
What angels shrink from even the very devil
On this occasion his own work abhorr'd,
So surfeited with the infernal revel.
Though he himself had sharpen'd every sword,
It almost quench'd his innate thirst of evil.
(Here Satan's sole good work deserves insertion—
'Tis, that he has both generals in reversion.)

VII

Let's skip a few short years of hollow peace,
Which peopled earth no better, hell as wont,
And heaven none—they form the tyrant's lease,
With nothing but new names subscribed upon't;
'Twill one day finish meantime they increase,
“With seven heads and ten horns,” and all in front,
Like Saint John's foretold beast; but ours are born
Less formidable in the head than horn.

VIII

In the first year of freedom's second dawn
Died George the Third, although no tyrant, one
Who shielded tyrants, till each sense withdrawn
Left him nor mental nor external sun:

A better farmer ne'er brush'd dew from lawn,
 A worse king never left a realm undone!
 He died—but left his subjects still behind,
 One half as mad—and t'other no less blind

IX

He died! his death made no great stir on earth:
 His burial made some pomp, there was profusion
 Of velvet, gilding, brass, and no great dearth
 Of aught but tears—save those shed by collusion
 For these things may be bought at their true worth;
 Of elegy there was the due infusion—
 Bought also; and the torches, cloaks, and banners,
 Herald, and relics of old Gothic manners,

X

Form'd a sepulchral melodrame. Of all
 The fools who flock'd to swell or see the show,
 Who cared about the corpse? The funeral
 Made the attraction, and the black the woe.
 There throb'd not there a thought which pierced the
 pall;
 And when the gorgeous coffin was laid low,
 It seem'd the mockery of hell to fold
 The rottenness of eighty years in gold.

XI

So mix his body with the dust! It might
Return to what it *must* far sooner, were
The natural compound left alone to fight
Its way back into earth, and fire, and air;
But the unnatural balsams merely blight
What nature made him at his birth, as bare
As the mere million's base unmummied clay—
Yet all his spices but prolong decay.

XII

He's dead—and upper earth with him has done;
He's buried; save the undertaker's bill,
Or lapidary scrawl, the world is gone
For him, unless he left a German will:
But where's the proctor who will ask his son?
In whom his qualities are reigning still,
Except that household virtue, most uncommon,
Of constancy to a bad, ugly woman.

XIII

“God save the king!” It is a large economy
In God to save the like; but if he will
Be saving, all the better; for not one am I
Of those who think damnation better still:

I hardly know too if not quite alone am I
In this small hope of bettering future ill
By circumscribing, with some slight restriction,
The eternity of hell's hot jurisdiction.

XIV

I know this is unpopular, I know
'Tis blasphemous; I know one may be damn'd
For hoping no one else may e'er be so,
I know my catechism; I know we're cramm'd
With the best doctrines till we quite o'erflow;
I know that all save England's church have shamm'd,
And that the other twice two hundred churches
And synagogues have made a *damn'd* bad purchase

XV

God help us all! God help me too! I am,
God knows, as helpless as the devil can wish,
And not a whit more difficult to damn,
Than is to bring to land a late-hook'd fish,
Or to the butcher to purvey the lamb,
Not that I'm fit for such a noble dish,
As one day will be that immortal fry
Of almost everybody born to die.

XVI

Saint Peter sat by the celestial gate,
And nodded o'er his keys, when, lo! there came
A wondrous noise he had not heard of late—
A rushing sound of wind, and stream, and flame;
In short, a roar of things extremely great,
Which would have made aught save a saint exclaim;
But he, with first a start and then a wink,
Said, "There's another star gone out, I think!"

XVII

But ere he could return to his repose,
A cherub flapp'd his right wing o'er his eyes—
At which St Peter yawn'd, and rubb'd his nose
"Saint porter," said the angel, "prithee rise!"
Waving a goodly wing, which glow'd, as glows
An earthly peacock's tail, with heavenly dyes:
To which the saint replied, "Well, what's the matter?
Is Lucifer come back with all this clatter?"

XVIII

"No," quoth the cherub; "George the Third is dead."
"And who is George the Third?" replied the
apostle:
"*What George? what Third?*" "The king of England,"
said
The angel. "Well! he won't find kings to jostle

Him on his way; but does he wear his head?

Because the last we saw here had a tussle,
And ne'er would have got into heaven's good graces,
Had he not flung his head in all our faces.

XIX

"He was, if I remember, king of France,
That head of his, which could not keep a crown
On earth, yet ventured in my face to advance
A claim to those of martyrs—like my own:

If I had had my sword, as I had once
When I cut ears off, I had cut him down,
But having but my *keys*, and not my brand,
I only knock'd his head from out his hand.

XX

"And then he set up such a headless howl,
That all the saints came out and took him in,
And there he sits by St Paul, cheek by jowl;
That fellow Paul—the parvenu! The skin
Of St Bartholomew, which makes his cowl
In heaven, and upon earth redeem'd his sin,
So as to make a martyr, never sped
Better than did this weak and wooden head.

XXI

“But had it come up here upon its shoulders,
There would have been a different tale to tell
The fellow-feeling in the saint’s beholders
Seems to have acted on them like a spell,
And so this very foolish head heaven solders
Back on its trunk’ it may be very well,
And seems the custom here to overthrow
Whatever has been wisely done below.”

XXII

The angel answer’d, “Peter! do not pout:
The king who comes has head and all entire,
And never knew much what it was about—
He did as doth the puppet—by its wue,
And will be judged like all the rest, no doubt:
My business and your own is not to inquire
Into such matters, but to mind our cue—
Which is to act as we are bid to do.”

XXIII

While thus they spake, the angelic caravan,
Arriving like a rush of mighty wind,
Cleaving the fields of space, as doth the swan
Some silver stream (say Ganges, Nile, or Inde,

Or Thames, or Tweed), and 'midst them an old man
 With an old soul, and both extremely blind,
 Halted before the gate, and in his shroud
 Seated their fellow-traveller on a cloud.

XXIV

But bringing up the rear of this bright host
 A Spirit of a different aspect wàved
 His wings, like thunder-clouds above some coast
 Whose barren beach with frequent wrecks is paved,
 His brow was like the deep when tempest-toss'd;
 Fierce and unfathomable thoughts engraved
 Eternal wrath on his immortal face,
 And *where* he gazed a gloom pervaded space.

XXV

As he drew near, he gazed upon the gate
 Ne'er to be enter'd more by him or Sin,
 With such a glance of supernatural hate,
 As made Saint Peter wish himself within;
 He patter'd with his keys at a great rate,
 And sweated through his apostolic skin:
 Of course his perspiration was but ichor,
 Or some such other spiritual liquor.

XXVI

The very cherubs huddled all together,
Like birds when soars the falcon, and they felt
A tingling to the tip of every feather,
And form'd a circle like Orion's belt
Around their poor old charge, who scarce knew whither
His guards had led him, though they gently dealt
With royal manes (for by many stories,
And true, we learn the angels all are Tories).

XXVII

As things were in this posture, the gate flew
Asunder, and the flashing of its hinges
Flung over space an universal hue
Of many-colour'd flame, until its tinges
Reach'd even our speck of earth, and made a new
Aurora borealis spread its fringes
O'er the North Pole; the same seen, when ice-bound,
By Captain Parry's crew, in "Melville's Sound."

XXVIII

And from the gate thrown open issued beaming
A beautiful and mighty Thing of Light,
Radiant with glory, like a banner streaming
Victorious from some world-o'erthrowing fight:

My poor comparisons must needs be teeming
With earthly likenesses, for here the night
Of clay obscures our best conceptions, saving
Johanna Southcote, or Bob Southey saving

XXIX

'Twas the archangel Michael, all men know
The make of angels and archangels, since
There's scarce a scribbler has not one to show,
From the fiends' leader to the angels' prince,
There also are some altar-pieces, though
I really can't say that they much evince
One's inner notions of immortal spirits,
But let the connoisseurs explain *their* merits.

XXX

Michael flew forth in glory and in good;
A goodly work of him from whom all glory
And good arise; the portal past—he stood,
Before him the young cherubs and saints hoary—
(I say *young*, begging to be understood
By looks, not years, and should be very sorry
To state, they were not older than St Peter,
But merely that they seem'd a little sweeter).

XXXI

The cherubs and the saints bow'd down before
That arch-angelic hierarch, the first
Of essences angelical, who wore
The aspect of a god; but this ne'er nursed
Pride in his heavenly bosom, in whose core
No thought, save for his Maker's service, durst
Intrude, however glorified and high;
He knew him but the viceroy of the sky.

XXXII

He and the sombre, silent Spirit met—
They knew each other both for good and ill;
Such was their power, that neither could forget
His former friend and future foe; but still
There was a high, immortal, proud regret
In either's eye, as if 'twere less their will
Than destiny to make the eternal years
Their date of war, and their "champ clos" the spheres.

XXXIII

But here they were in neutral space· we know
From Job, that Satan hath the power to pay
A heavenly visit thrice a year or so,
And that the "sons of God," like those of clay,

Must keep him company; and we might show
From the same book, in how polite a way
The dialogue is held between the Powers
Of Good and Evil—but 'twould take up hours.

XXXIV

And this is not a theologic tract,
To prove with Hebrew and with Arabic,
If Job be allegory or a fact,
But a true narrative; and thus I pick
From out the whole but such and such an act
As sets aside the slightest thought of trick.
'Tis every tittle true, beyond suspicion,
And accurate as any other vision.

XXXV

The spirits were in neutral space, before
The gate of heaven; like eastern thresholds is
The place where Death's grand cause is argued o'er,
And souls despatch'd to that world or to this;
And therefore Michael and the other wore
A civil aspect though they did not kiss,
Yet still between his Darkness and his Brightness
There pass'd a mutual glance of great politeness.

XXXVI

The Archangel bow'd, not like a modern beau,
But with a graceful Oriental bend,
Pressing one radiant arm just where below
The heart in good men is supposed to tend;
He turn'd as to an equal, not too low,
But kindly, Satan met his ancient friend
With more hauteur, as might an old Castilian
Poor noble meet a mushroom rich civilian.

XXXVII

He merely bent his diabolic brow
An instant; and then raising it, he stood
In act to assert his right or wrong, and show
Cause why King George by no means could or
should
Make out a case to be exempt from woe
Eternal, more than other kings, endued
With better sense and hearts, whom history mentions,
Who long have "paved hell with their good intentions."

XXXVIII

Michael began "What wouldst thou with this man,
Now dead, and brought before the Lord? What ill
Hath he wrought since his mortal race began,
That thou canst claim him? Speak! and do thy will,

If it be just: if in this earthly span
He hath been greatly failing to fulfil
His duties as a king and mortal, say,
And he is thine; if not, let him have way."

XXXIX

"Michael!" replied the Prince of Air, "even here,
Before the Gate of him thou servest, must
I claim my subject and will make appear
That as he was my worshipper in dust,
So shall he be in spirit, although dear
To thee and thine, because nor wine nor lust
Were of his weaknesses, yet on the throne
He reign'd o'er millions to serve me alone.

XL

"Look to *our* earth, or rather *mine*, it was,
Once, more thy master's. but I triumph not
In this poor planet's conquest; nor, alas!
Need he thou servest envy me my lot
With all the myriads of bright worlds which pass
In worship round him, he may have forgot
Yon weak creation of such paltry things.
I think few worth damnation save their kings,—

XLI

“And these but as a kind of quit-rent, to
Assert my right as lord · and even had
I such an inclination, ’twere (as you
Well know) superfluous, they are grown so bad,
That hell has nothing better left to do
Than leave them to themselves · so much more mad
And evil by their own internal curse,
Heaven cannot make them better, nor I worse

XLII

“Look to the earth, I said, and say again ·
When this old, blind, mad, helpless, weak, poor
worm
Began in youth’s first bloom and flush to reign,
The world and he both wore a different form,
And much of earth and all the watery plain
Of ocean call’d him king: through many a storm
His isles had floated on the abyss of time;
For the rough virtues chose them for their clime.

XLIII

“He came to his sceptre young; he leaves it old ·
Look to the state in which he found his realm,
And left it; and his annals too behold,
How to a minion first he gave the helm;

How grew upon his heart a thirst for gold,
 The beggar's vice, which can but overwhelm
 The meanest hearts; and for the rest, but glance
 Thine eye along America and France.

XLIV

"Tis true, he was a tool from first to last
 (I have the workmen safe); but as a tool
 So let him be consumed. From out the past
 Of ages, since mankind have known the rule
 Of monarchs—from the bloody rolls amass'd
 Of sin and slaughter—from the Cæsar's school,
 Take the worst pupil; and produce a reign
 More drench'd with gore, more cumber'd with the
 slain.

XLV

"He ever warr'd with freedom and the free:
 Nations as men, home subjects, foreign foes,
 So that they utter'd the word 'Liberty!'
 Found George the Third their first opponent. Whose
 History was ever stain'd as his will be
 With national and individual woes?
 I grant his household abstinence; I grant
 His neutral virtues, which most monarchs want;

XLVI

"I know he was a constant consort; own
He was a decent sire, and middling lord.
All this is much, and most upon a throne;
As temperance, if at Apicius' board,
Is more than at an anchoite's supper shown.
I grant him all the kindest can accord;
And this was well for him, but not for those
Millions who found him what oppression chose

XLVII

"The New World shook him off, the Old yet groans
Beneath what he and his prepared, if not
Completed: he leaves heirs on many thrones
To all his vices, without what begot
Compassion for him—his tame virtues; drones
Who sleep, or despots who have now forgot
A lesson which shall be re-taught them, wake
Upon the thrones of earth; but let them quake!

XLVIII

"Five millions of the primitive, who hold
The faith which makes ye great on earth, implored
A *part* of that vast *all* they held of old,—
Freedom to worship—not alone your Lord,

Michael, but you, and you, Saint Peter! Cold
 Must be your souls, if you have not abhorri'd
 The foe to Catholic participation
 In all the license of a Christian nation.

XLIX

"True! he allow'd them to pray God; but as
 A consequence of prayer, refused the law
 Which would have placed them upon the same base
 With those who did not hold the saints in awe "
 But here Saint Peter started from his place,
 And cried, "You may the prisoner withdraw:
 Ere heaven shall ope her portals to this Guelph,
 While I am guard, may I be damn'd myself!

L

"Sooner will I with Cerberus exchange
 My office (and *his* is no sinecure)
 Than see this royal Bedlam bigot range
 The azure fields of heaven, of that be sure!"
 "Saint!" replied Satan, "you do well to avenge
 The wrongs he made your satellites endure,
 And if to this exchange you should be given,
 I'll try to coax *our* Cerberus up to heaven!"

LI

Here Michael interposed "Good saint! and devil!

Pray, not so fast, you both outrun discretion.

Saint Peter! you were wont to be more civil!

Satan! excuse this warmth of his expression,
And condescension to the vulgar's level.

Even saints sometimes forget themselves in session,
Have you got more to say?"—"No"—"If you please,
I'll trouble you to call your witnesses."

LII

Then Satan turn'd and waved his swarthy hand,

Which stirr'd with its electric qualities

Clouds farther off than we can understand,

Although we find him sometimes in our skies;
Infernal thunder shook both sea and land

In all the planets, and hell's batteries
Let off the artillery, which Milton mentions
As one of Satan's most sublime inventions.

LIII

This was a signal unto such damn'd souls

As have the privilege of their damnation
Extended far beyond the mere controls

Of worlds past, present, or to come; no station

Is theirs particularly in the rolls
 Of hell assign'd; but where their inclination
 Or business carries them in search of game,
 They may range freely—being damn'd the same.

LIV

They're proud of this—as very well they may,
 It being a sort of knighthood, or gilt key
 Stuck in their loins; or like to an “entré”
 Up the back stairs, or such free-masonry.
 I borrow my comparisons from clay,
 Being clay myself Let not those spirits be
 Offended with such base low likenesses;
 We know their posts are nobler far than these.

LV

When the great signal ran from heaven to hell—
 About ten million times the distance reckon'd
 From our sun to its earth, as we can tell
 How much time it takes up, even to a second,
 For every ray that travels to dispel
 The fogs of London, through which, dimly beacon'd,
 The weathercocks are gilt some thrice a year,
 If that the *summer* is not too severe:

LVI

I say that I can tell—'twas half a minute;
I know the solar beams take up more time
Ere, pack'd up for their journey, they begin it;
But then their telegraph is less sublime,
And if they ran a race, they would not win it
'Gainst Satan's couriers bound for their own clime,
The sun takes up some years for every ray
To reach its goal—the devil not half a day.

LVII

Upon the verge of space, about the size
Of half-a-crown, a little speck appear'd
(I've seen a something like it in the skies
In the Ægean, ere a squall); it near'd,
And, growing bigger, took another guise;
Like an aerial ship it tack'd, and steer'd,
Or *was* steer'd (I am doubtful of the grammar
Of the last phrase, which makes the stanza stammer, -

LVIII

But take your choice) and then it grew a cloud;
And so it was—a cloud of witnesses.
But such a cloud! No land e'er saw a crowd
Of locusts numerous as the heavens saw these,

They shadow'd with their myriads space; their loud
 And varied cries were like those of wild geese
 (If nations may be liken'd to a goose),
 And realised the phrase of "hell broke loose."

LIX

Here crash'd a sturdy oath of stout John Bull,
 Who damn'd away his eyes as heretofore:
 There Paddy brogued "By Jasus!"—"What's your
 wull?"

The temperate Scot exclaim'd. the French ghost
 swore
 In certain terms I shan't translate in full,
 As the first coachman will; and 'midst the war,
 The voice of Jonathan was heard to express,
 "Our president is going to war, I guess."

LX

Besides there were the Spaniard, Dutch, and Dane,
 In short, an universal shoal of shades,
 From Otahete's isle to Salisbury Plain,
 Of all climes and professions, years and trades,
 Ready to swear against the good king's reign,
 Bitter as clubs in cards are against spades.
 All summon'd by this grand "subpœna," to
 Try if kings mayn't be damn'd like me or you.

LXI

When Michael saw this host, he first grew pale,
As angels can, next, like Italian twilight,
He turn'd all colours—as a peacock's tail,
Or sunset streaming through a Gothic skylight
In some old abbey, or a trout not stale,
Or distant lightning on the horizon *by* night,
Or a fresh rainbow, or a grand review
Of thirty regiments in red, green, and blue.

LXII

Then he address'd himself to Satan: "Why—
My good old friend, for such I deem you, though
Our different parties make us fight so shy,
I ne'er mistake you for a *personal* foe;
Our difference is *political*, and I
Trust that, whatever may occur below,
You know my great respect for you: and this
Makes me regret whate'er you do amiss—

LXIII

"Why, my dear Lucifer, would you abuse
My call for witnesses? I did not mean
That you should half of earth and hell produce;
'Tis even superfluous, since two honest, clean,

True testimonies are enough: we lose
 Our time, nay, our eternity, between
 The accusation and defence: if we
 Hear both, 'twill stretch our immortality."

LXIV

Satan replied, "To me the matter is
 Indifferent, in a personal point of view:
 I can have fifty better souls than this
 With far less trouble than we have gone through
 Already; and I merely argued his
 Late majesty of Britain's case with you
 Upon a point of form. you may dispose
 Of him; I've kings enough below, God knows!"

LXV

Thus spoke the Demon (late call'd "multifaced"
 By multo-scribbling Southey). "Then we'll call
 One or two persons of the myriads placed
 Around our congress, and dispense with all
 The rest," quoth Michael: "Who may be so graced
 As to speak first? there's choice enough—who shall
 It be?" Then Satan answer'd, "There are many,
 But you may choose Jack Wilkes as well as any."

LXVI

A merry, cock-eyed, curious-looking sprite
Upon the instant started from the throng,
Dress'd in a fashion now forgotten quite,
For all the fashions of the flesh stick long
By people in the next world; where unite
All the costumes since Adam's, right or wrong,
From Eve's fig-leaf down to the petticoat,
Almost as scanty, of days less remote.

LXVII

The spirit look'd around upon the crowds
Assembled, and exclaim'd, "My friends of all
The spheres, we shall catch cold amongst these clouds;
So let's to business: why this general call?
If those are freeholders I see in shrouds,
And 'tis for an election that they bawl,
Behold a candidate with unturn'd coat!
Saint Peter, may I count upon your vote?"

LXVIII

"Sir," replied Michael, "you mustake; these things
Are of a former life, and what we do
Above is more august, to judge of kings
Is the tribunal met. so now you know."

"Then I presume those gentlemen with wings,"
 Said Wilkes, "are cherubs; and that soul below
 Looks much like George the Third, but to my mind
 A good deal older—Bless me! is he blind?"

LXIX

"He is what you behold him, and his doom
 Depends upon his deeds," the Angel said;
 "If you have aught to arraign in him, the tomb
 Gives license to the humblest beggar's head
 To lift itself against the loftiest."—"Some,"
 Said Wilkes, "don't wait to see them laid in lead,
 For such a liberty—and I, for one,
 Have told them what I thought beneath the sun."

LXX

"*Above* the sun repeat, then, what thou hast
 To urge against him," said the Archangel. "Why,"
 Replied the spirit, "since old scores are past,
 Must I turn evidence? In faith, not I.
 Besides, I beat him hollow at the last,
 With all his Lords and Commons: in the sky
 I don't like ripping up old stories, since
 His conduct was but natural in a prince."

LXXI

"Foolish, no doubt, and wicked, to oppress
A poor unlucky devil without a shilling;
But then I blame the man himself much less
Than Bute and Grafton, and shall be unwilling
To see him punish'd here for their excess,
Since they were both damn'd long ago, and still in
Their place below. for me, I have forgiven,
And vote his 'habeas corpus' into heaven."

LXXII

"Wilkes," said the Devil, "I understand all this;
You turn'd to half a courtier ere you died,
And seem to think it would not be amiss
To grow a whole one on the other side
Of Charon's ferry; you forget that *his*
Reign is concluded; whatsoe'er betide,
He won't be sovereign more: you've lost your labour,
For at the best he will but be your neighbour."

LXXIII

"However, I knew what to think of it,
When I beheld you in your jesting way,
Flitting and whispering round about the spit
Where Belial, upon duty for the day,

With Fox's lard was basting William Pitt,
 His pupil; I knew what to think, I say:
 That fellow even in hell breeds farther ills;
 I'll have him *gagg'd*—'twas one of his own bills.

LXXIV

"Call Junius!" From the crowd a shadow stalk'd,
 And at the name there was a general squeeze,
 So that the very ghosts no longer walk'd
 In comfort, at their own aerial ease,
 But were all ramm'd, and jamm'd (but to be balk'd,
 As we shall see), and jostled hands and knees,
 Like wind compress'd and pent within a bladder,
 Or like a human colic, which is sadder.

LXXV

The shadow came—a tall, thin, grey-hair'd figure,
 That look'd as it had been a shade on earth;
 Quick in its motions, with an air of vigour,
 But nought to mark its breeding or its birth;
 Now it wax'd little, then again grew bigger,
 With now an air of gloom, or savage mirth,
 But as you gazed upon its features, they
 Changed every instant—to *what*, none could say.

LXXVI

The more intently the ghosts gazed, the less
 Could they distinguish whose the features were;
The Devil himself seem'd puzzled even to guess;
 They varied like a dream—now here, now there;
And several people swore from out the press,
 They knew him perfectly; and one could swear
He was his father: upon which another
Was sure he was his mother's cousin's brother:

LXXVII

Another, that he was a duke, or knight,
 An orator, a lawyer, or a priest,
A nabob, a man-midwife; but the wight
 Mysterious changed his countenance at least
As oft as they their minds; though in full sight
 He stood, the puzzle only was increased;
The man was a phantasmagoria in
Himself—he was so volatile and thin.

LXXVIII

The moment that you had pronounced him *one*,
 Presto! his face changed, and he was another;
And when that change was hardly well put on,
 It varied, till I don't think his own mother

(If that he had a mother) would her son
 Have known, he shifted so from one to t'other;
 Till guessing from a pleasure grew a task,
 At this epistolary "Iron Mask "

LXXIX

For sometimes he like Cerberus would seem—
 "Thlee gentlemen at once" (as sagely says
 Good Mrs Malaprop), then you might deem
 That he was not even *one*; now many rays
 Were flashing round him; and now a thick steam
 Hid him from sight—like fogs on London days.
 Now Burke, now Tooke, he grew to people's fancies,
 And certes often like Sir Philip Francis.

LXXX

I've an hypothesis—'tis quite my own;
 I never let it out till now, for fear
 Of doing people harm about the throne,
 And injuring some minister or peer,
 On whom the stigma might perhaps be blown;
 It is—my gentle public, lend thine ear!
 'Tis, that what Junius we are wont to call
 Was *really, truly*, nobody at all.

LXXXI

I don't see wherefore letters should not be
Written without hands, since we daily view
Them written without heads; and books, we see,
Are fill'd as well without the latter too.
And really till we fix on somebody
For certain sure to claim them as his due,
Their author, like the Niger's mouth, will bother
The world to say if *there* be mouth or author.

LXXXII

"And who and what art thou?" the Archangel said.
"For *that* you may consult my title-page,"
Replied this mighty shadow of a shade
"If I have kept my secret half an age,
I scarce shall tell it now."—"Canst thou upbraid,"
Continued Michael, "George Rex, or allege
Aught further?" Junius answer'd, "You had better
First ask him for *his* answer to my letter:

LXXXIII

"My charges upon record will outlast
The brass of both his epitaph and tomb"
"Repent'st thou not," said Michael, "of some past
Exaggeration? something which may doom

Thyself if false, as him if true? Thou wast
 Too bitter—is it not so?—in thy gloom
 Of passion?—"Passion!" cried the phantom dim,
 "I loved my country, and I hated him.

LXXXIV

"What I have written, I have written · let
 The rest be on his head or mine!" So spoke
 Old "Nominis Umbra"; and while speaking yet,
 Away he melted in celestial smoke.
 Then Satan said to Michael, "Don't forget
 To call George Washington, and John Horne Tooke,
 And Franklin";—but at this time there was heard
 A cry for room, though not a phantom stirr'd.

LXXXV

At length with jostling, elbowing, and the aid
 Of cherubim appointed to that post,
 The devil Asmodeus to the circle made
 His way, and look'd as if his journey cost
 Some trouble. When his burden down he laid,
 "What's this?" cried Michael; "why, 'tis not a
 ghost?"
 "I know it," quoth the incubus; "but he
 Shall be one, if you leave the affair to me.

LXXXVI

“Confound the renegado! I have sprain’d
My left wing, he’s so heavy, one would think
Some of his works about his neck were chain’d.
But to the point; while hovering o’er the brink
Of Skiddaw (where as usual it still rain’d),
I saw a taper, far below me, wink,
And stooping, caught this fellow at a libel—
No less on history than the Holy Bible.

LXXXVII

“The former is the devil’s scripture, and
The latter yours, good Michael: so the affair
Belongs to all of us, you understand.
I snatch’d him up just as you see him there,
And brought him off for sentence out of hand;
I’ve scarcely been ten minutes in the air—
At least a quarter it can hardly be:
I dare say that his wife is still at tea.”

LXXXVIII

Here Satan said, “I know this man of old,
And have expected him for some time here;
A sillier fellow you will scarce behold,
Or more conceited in his petty sphere:

But surely it was not worth while to fold
 Such trash below your wing, Asmodeus dear:
 We had the poor wretch safe (without being bored
 With carriage) coming of his own accord.

LXXXIX

"But since he's here, let's see what he has done."
 "Done!" cried Asmodeus, "he anticipates
 The very business you are now upon,
 And scribbles as if head clerk to the Fates.
 Who knows to what his ribaldry may run,
 When such an ass as this, like Balaam's, prates?"
 "Let's hear," quoth Michael, "what he has to say.
 You know we're bound to that in every way."

XC

Now the bard, glad to get an audience, which
 By no means often was his case below,
 Began to cough, and hawk, and hem, and pitch
 His voice into that awful note of woe
 To all unhappy hearers within reach
 Of poets when the tide of rhyme's in flow;
 But stuck fast with his first hexameter,
 Not one of all whose gouty feet would stir.

XCI

But ere the spavin'd dactyls could be spurr'd
 Into recitative, in great dismay
Both cherubim and seraphim were heard
 To murmur loudly through their long array;
And Michael rose ere he could get a word
 Of all his founder'd verses under way,
And cried, "For God's sake stop, my friend! 'twere
 best—
Non Di, non homines—you know the rest."

XCII

A general bustle spread throughout the throng,
 Which seem'd to hold all verse in detestation,
'The angels had of course enough of song
 When upon service, and the generation
Of ghosts had heard too much in life, not long
 Before, to profit by a new occasion:
'The monarch, mute till then, exclaim'd, "What 'what!
Pye come again? No more—no more of that!"

XCIII

The tumult grew; an universal cough
 Convulsed the skies, as during a debate,
When Castlereagh has been up long enough
 (Before he was first minister of state,

I mean—the *slaves hear now*); some cried “Off, off!”

As at a farce; till, grown quite desperate,
The bard Saint Peter pray’d to interpose
(Himself an author) only for his prose.

XCIV

The varlet was not an ill-favour’d knave;
A good deal like a vulture in the face,
With a hook nose and a hawk’s eye, which gave
A smart and sharper-looking sort of grace
To his whole aspect, which, though rather grave,
Was by no means so ugly as his case;
But that, indeed, was hopeless as can be,
Quite a poetic felony “*de se*.”

XCV

Then Michael blew his trump, and still’d the noise
With one still greater, as is yet the mode
On earth besides, except some grumbling voice,
Which now and then will make a slight inroad
Upon decorous silence, few will twice
Lift up their lungs when fairly overcrow’d;
And now the bard could plead his own bad cause,
With all the attitudes of self-applause.

XCVI

He said—(I only give the heads)—he said,
He meant no harm in scribbling, 'twas his way
Upon all topics; 'twas, besides, his bread,
Of which he butter'd both sides, 'twould delay
Too long the assembly (he was pleased to dread),
And take up rather more time than a day,
To name his works—he would but cite a few—
“Wat Tyler”—“Rhymes on Blenheim”—“Water-
loo.”

XCVII

He had written praises of a regicide;
He had written praises of all kings whatever,
He had written for republics far and wide,
And then against them bitterer than ever;
For pantisocracy he once had cried
Aloud, a scheme less moral than 'twas clever;
Then grew a hearty anti-Jacobin—
Had turn'd his coat—and would have turn'd his skin.

XCVIII

He had sung against all battles, and again
In their high praise and glory; he had call'd
Reviewing “the ungentle craft,” and then
Become as base a critic as e'er crawl'd—

Fed, paid, and pamper'd by the very men
 By whom his muse and morals had been maul'd:
 He had written much blank verse, and blanker prose,
 And more of both than anybody knows.

XCIX

He had written Wesley's life:—here turning round
 To Satan, "Sir, I'm ready to write yours,
 In two octavo volumes, nicely bound,
 With notes and preface, all that most allures
 The pious purchaser, and there's no ground
 For fear, for I can choose my own reviewers.
 So let me have the proper documents,
 That I may add you to my other saints."

C

Satan bow'd, and was silent "Well, if you,
 With amiable modesty, decline
 My offer, what says Michael? There are few
 Whose memoirs could be render'd more divine.
 Mine is a pen of all work; not so new
 As it was once, but I would make you shine
 Like your own trumpet. By the way, my own
 Has more of brass in it, and is as well blown.

CI

"But talking about trumpets, here's my Vision!
Now you shall judge, all people; yes, you shall
Judge with my judgment, and by my decision
Be guided who shall enter heaven or fall.
I settle all these things by intuition,
Times present, past, to come, heaven, hell, and all,
Like King Alfonso. When I thus see double,
I save the Deity some worlds of trouble."

CII

He ceased, and drew forth an MS.; and no
Persuasion on the part of devils, saints,
Or angels, now could stop the torrent; so
He read the first three lines of the contents;
But at the fourth, the whole spiritual show
Had vanish'd, with variety of scents,
Ambrosial and sulphureous, as they sprang,
Like lightning, off from his "melodious twang."

CIII

Those grand heroics acted as a spell:
The angels stopp'd their ears and plied their
pinions,
The devils ran howling, deafen'd, down to hell;
The ghosts fled, gibbering, for their own domin-
ions—

(For 'tis not yet decided where they dwell,
 And I leave every man to his opinions);
 Michael took refuge in his trump—but, lo!
 His teeth were set on edge, he could not blow!

CIV

Saint Peter, who has hitherto been known
 For an impetuous saint, upraised his keys,
 And at the fifth line knock'd the poet down;
 Who fell like Phæton, but more at ease,
 Into his lake, for there he did not drown;
 A different web being by the Destinies
 Woven for the Laureate's final wreath, whene'er
 Reform shall happen either here or there.

CV

He first sank to the bottom—like his works,
 But soon rose to the surface—like himself;
 For all corrupted things are buoy'd like corks,
 By their own rottenness, light as an elf,
 Or wisp that flits o'er a morass—he lurks,
 It may be, still, like dull books on a shelf,
 In his own den, to scrawl some "Life" or "Vision,"
 As Welborn says—"the devil turn'd precisian."

CVI

As for the rest, to come to the conclusion
Of this true dream, the telescope is gone
Which kept my optics free from all delusion,
And show'd me what I in my turn have shown,
All I saw farther, in the last confusion,
Was, that King George slipp'd into heaven for one;
And when the tumult dwindled to a calm,
I left him practising the hundredth psalm.